

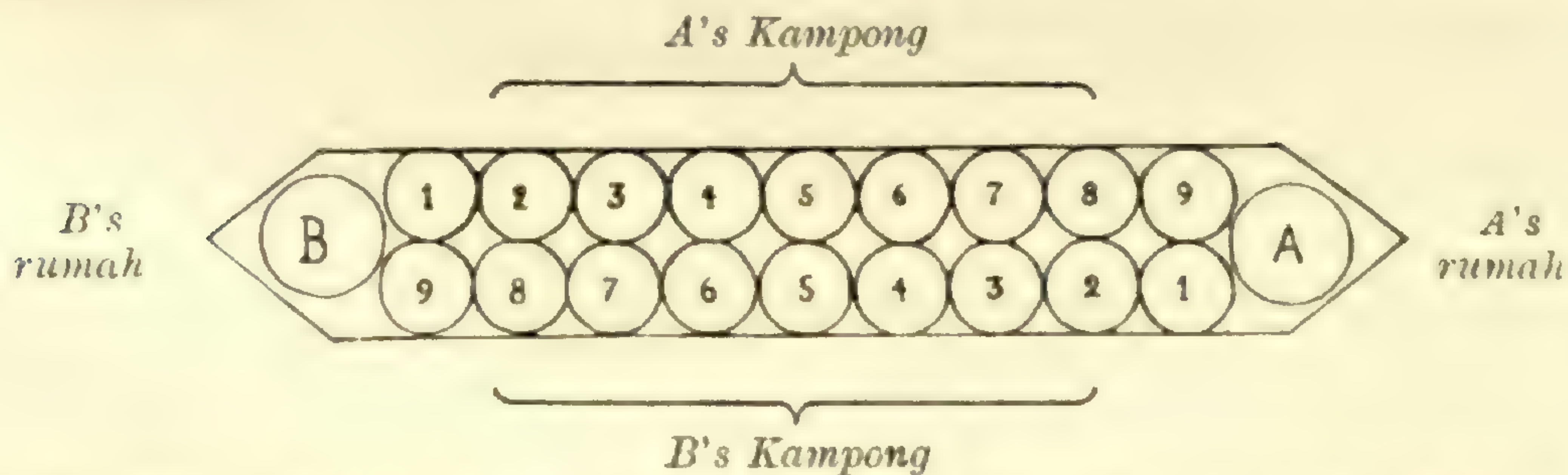
# New Notes on the Game of "Chongkak."

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A few years ago, driving with a friend along the coast-road from Sourabaya to Grissé, we noticed two Madurese coolies playing "chongkak," which in Java is called "dakon." For a few guilders we bought the board, an old piece, beautifully carved, apparently of Balinese origin. It has the shape of a dragon with two heads, the back being flat and containing the two rows of 9 holes each, and the two "rumahs." The body rests on four wheels. I had seen "chongkak" played in Singapore, and the game our Javanese servants explained to us, (which they did rather unwillingly, "dakon" being considered as a women's game) followed, as far as I can remember, the rules given by Mr. Hellier in No. 49 (December 1907) of this Journal.

When going home on leave shortly afterwards, we took the board with us and played the game on board the mailsteamer. In Colombo some Singhalese gentlemen joined the steamer and soon became interested in our game. They informed me that "Chongkak," which name is also used in Ceylon, is one of the oldest games of India, the two rows of holes, characteristic for the game, being found cut in the rocks of the oldest temples. One of the gentlemen, whose name to my regret I cannot remember, kindly taught me the game as it is played in Ceylon, and we had many interesting matches, the last one lasting about three days. As the Ceylonese game seems to be more complicated than the Malay one, and might even be attractive to European lovers of such pass-times, I shall try to give below the full rules and a few hints. The Malay expressions I borrow from Mr. Hellier.

On the board in my possession there are twenty holes arranged as follows:



The game is played by two players, A and B. Kampong and rumah A belong to A, kampong and rumah B to B. At the beginning of a match 9 seeds are placed in each of the 9 holes of each kampong; rumah A and B remaining empty.

## RULES.

## § 1.

The object of each player in the game is to obtain all the seeds of his opponent. A "set" consists of as many games as may be necessary for that purpose.

## § 2.

The first game of a set is started by both players together. Each one takes out the whole contents of any hole in his kampong and, beginning with the hole on the left of that just emptied, drops one seed into each hole, going from the right to the left around the board. When coming to his own rumah, he drops one seed into it; but he drops none into his opponent's.

## § 3.

If the last seed falls into a hole wherein there are other seeds, the whole contents are taken out and distributed as above, beginning with the hole on the left of that just emptied. Whether the hole into which the last seed was dropped is in the player's own kampong or in that of his opponent, makes no difference in this case.

## § 4.

If the last seed falls into the rumah of the player, he may start again distributing, as above, the contents of any hole of his own kampong.

## § 5.

If the last seed falls into an empty hole in his own kampong, he takes out that seed *and* the whole contents of the opposite hole in his opponent's kampong, and puts both into his rumah. The player then ceases playing until it is his turn again.

## § 6.

If the last seed falls into an empty hole in the player's own kampong, and the opposite hole in his opponent's kampong is also empty, the seed remains there, but the player ceases playing until it is his turn again. •

## § 7.

If the last seed falls into an empty hole in the kampong of the opponent, the seed remains there, and the player stops playing until it is his turn again.

## § 8.

Only the first game of a set is started by both players at the same time. If one of the players has to stop in accordance with §5, 6 or 7, the other continues playing until he meets with the same fate. Thereupon his opponent starts again, and so they play alternately. Each player can only start in his own kampong.

## § 9.

A game is finished, if in the kampong of one of the players all holes are empty, and the respective player has dropped his last seed either into his own rumah or into an empty hole in the kampong of

his opponent, or his last seed or seeds have been taken by his opponent in accordance with § 5. In either case his opponent must be in a position to play once more in a way which makes him stop playing also, but without being compelled to distribute again seeds into the empty holes of the other player's kampong. In the latter case the other player will be in a position to play again.

#### § 10.

The player who has made the last move in a game, starts the next one. Only the first game of a set is started by both players together.

#### § 11.

A game being finished, both players fill up again the holes of their kampongs with the contents of their rumahs. The player who has lost some seeds in the preceeding game, fills up only as many holes in his kampong as can be filled with 9 seeds. If, for instance, after a game is finished, A has 97 seeds and B only 65, A fills up all the holes of his kampong with 9 seeds each, and keeps the balance of 16 seeds in his rumah, whilst B, beginning with the hole next to his rumah and continuing to the right, fills up of holes of his kampong only and keeps 2 seeds in his rumah. The 2 empty holes in B's kampong (B 1 and 2) remain empty and are not used at all during the game which follows. If, however, B recovers during this game a sufficient number of seeds, he can fill up for the next game more holes of his kampong again.

#### § 12.

A set is finished if after the end of a game one of the players has less than 9 seeds, so that he is unable to fill up even one hole.

### HINTS.

For every player, of course, it will be most interesting to find out by himself the various tricks for smart play, but a few hints may be allowed:

1. It is always advisable to avoid big accumulations of seeds in one's own kampong. If your turn comes, always begin with the biggest pile in your kampong, unless, towards the end of the game, calculation advises otherwise. It is profitable for your rumah; you fill up any empty holes wherein otherwise you may come to a stop; you spoil your opponent's chance of making a big haul, and by filling up your opponent's holes you get a chance yourself of a profitable taking.

2. Bear in mind § 4! It will bring many seeds into your rumah, and makes opportunities for attempts on your opponent's treasures.

3. Do your utmost to get the last move in the game. It gives you the start of the next game, which has many advantages.

4. At the beginning of each game, try to remember how many seeds there are in each hole. Calculation is easy by counting the

rounds made. Find out a system providing for each starting position, which is not difficult, as their number is limited. The first rounds in all cases in which the starting player has all the 9 holes of his kampong filled up, should be played as follows: *e.g.* A starts, B has only 7 holes filled up. A commences with the contents of hole A 1; the last seed falls into his rumah. He then begins with A 7, ends in B 9, and again in his rumah. Follows A 5, ends in B 8 and again in his rumah. Next is A 3, ends in B 7, and again in his rumah. Then the system ends, and the following move is left to A's calculation. The rule:—begin with 1, then with the hole situated opposite the opponent's last hole, and further with the second to the right of the hole emptied in the preceeding round,—can be applied to all games whenever the starting player has at his disposal all the 9 holes of his kampong. If he has less, the system changes, but it is similar and can easily be figured out.

